

Press Release

October 31,
2005

HOMELAND SECURITY URGES SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES TO TAKE STEPS TO PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES

New PSAs Explain Importance and Dispel Myths about Difficulty and Costs

WASHINGTON, D.C. - *Ready Business*, an extension of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's successful *Ready* campaign, is designed to educate owners and managers of small to medium-sized businesses about preparing their employees, operations and assets in the event of an emergency. To help spread this critical message, Homeland Security, in partnership with The Advertising Council, has sponsored new business-specific public service announcements (PSAs). The PSAs will launch nationally this November, and will focus on the affordability and ease of business continuity planning, and the resources available to aid businesses in the process.

"Small businesses form the backbone of our nation's economy, and their emergency preparedness is crucial to keeping our nation secure," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "A commitment to planning today can protect a business and give it a better chance for survival in the event of a natural disaster, terrorist attack or other emergency."

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, small businesses represent more than 99 percent of all employers; provide approximately 75 percent of the net new jobs added to the economy; and represent 97 percent of all U.S. exporters. Unfortunately, small to medium-sized businesses are also the most vulnerable in the event of an emergency. By taking some steps ahead of time, many of these businesses can be better prepared to survive and recover after an emergency, thus making the nation and the economy more stable.

Although most businesses agree emergency preparedness is important, too few are taking the necessary steps to prepare. According to an October 2005 survey of small businesses conducted by The Ad Council, 92 percent of respondents said that it is very important or somewhat important for businesses to take steps to prepare for a catastrophic disaster, such as an earthquake, hurricane or terrorist attack. However, only 39 percent said that their company has a plan in place in the event of such a disaster. Qualitative research with this audience demonstrated that even though many acknowledge the value of preparedness, they see time, workforce and money constraints prohibiting them from developing a business continuity plan. The goal of these new *Ready Business* ads is to

show that developing an emergency preparedness plan can be relatively easy and cost-affordable.

"The *Ready Business* campaign has been very well received during the past year, and many businesses have been motivated to take steps toward preparedness," said Ad Council President Peggy Conlon. "I believe this new round of work will resonate with the business community on a personal level, and reach those businesses that still have not taken advantage of the important resources available to them."

The new PSA campaign, titled "Experience Lines," was created by Chicago-based business-to-business agency Slack Barshinger and includes print, radio and Internet PSAs. Designed to reach managers and owners of small to medium-sized businesses in a number of industries, the advertisements encourage business people to visit the *Ready Business* campaign website at www.ready.gov. The website and other *Ready Business* materials provide practical steps and easy-to-use templates that can assist businesses in tasks such as creating an evacuation plan; planning for fire safety; considering people with special needs in their plans; securing facilities and equipment; and reviewing insurance coverage.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and The Advertising Council launched the Ready Business campaign in September 2004. This extension of Homeland Security's successful Ready campaign, which has helped millions of individuals and families prepare for emergencies, focuses on business preparedness. Ready Business helps owners and managers of small- to medium-sized businesses prepare their employees, operations and assets in the event of an emergency. Visit www.Ready.gov for more information.

###